

Contributions

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

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The word Christian under different heads is defined as follows: 1. A believer in the religion of Christ. 2. A professor of his belief in the religion of Christ. 3. A real disciple of Christ; one who believes in the truth of the Christian religion, and studies to follow the example, and obey the precepts of Christ; a believer in Christ who is characterized by real piety. One who is willing to preach and teach the doctrines of Christ. It is indeed melancholly to observe how frequently the fair form of Christianity appears in an aspect so forbidding as rather to repel than allure the multitudes who have no knowledge of her but what they derive from the spirit, conversation, and conduct of her professed friends. As exhibited by some, she appears in the form of a cold and heartless orthodoxy, with a head filled with notions which have no influence in refining the affections or regulating the practice. In others, with an eye of fire and a tongue sharpened with bitter words, ready to denounce all who are not actuated by the same burning zeal—a zeal unmitigated by meekness of heavenly wisdom. In others again, she appears all deformed with passion—all ecstasy in the religious assembly—all tenderness in the hour of excitement—but in the world, morose, censorious, proud, selfish and dogmatical. Such is not the religion of the Christian. The Christian faith is worked by love, purified in the heart, and has overcome the world. He has wisdom that comes from above—first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; and ever brings forth the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance.

There must be traits in his loving character which can be noticed with more distinctness, not only because of their beauty, but because there is a deplorable deficiency in most of those who bear the name of Christ; and in some measure possess the mind that was in him. These are spirituality and humility; the latter resulting, as it always does in man sanctified but in part, from the former. The Christian has spirituality and so uniform that he has only as it were, one face, and that of intense brightness, to behold. Spirituality in the Christian is the habit of the soul illuminated by the truth, and sanctified through that truth, by the Spirit of God.

Such a one employs his thoughts and exercises his affections with facility and

with lively interest on spiritual objects. He sets the Lord always before him, apprehends the law of God in its cognizance of the inner man, and feels and acts under a sense of its obligations. Jesus Christ is present by the spirit, is seen in his beauty, is submitted to in his authority, and is alone trusted for salvation, and loved as "the chiefest among ten thousand." The spiritual things are the very elements of his soul;—of them he thinks, and writes and talks; and, in all situations, he acts in reference to them and under their influence. The Christian has humility, without which there can be no genuine religion. Jesus Christ was meek and lowly in heart, and no one can have learned of him without imbibing some measure of this excellent grace. Without it there may be ardor in religion; and then will be seen, acted out, if not heard, the cry, "Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." And in this day of excitement, when everything must be done with strong feeling and vigorous action, it is painful to observe how much that connects itself to the spirit of the age, is either deficient, or wholly destitute of the brightest glory of the religion of a sinner saved by grace.

A Christian is a man who forms a just estimate of his own character, as he weighs himself in the balance of the sanctuary, and feels aright the force of his own judgment of himself. He compares himself, not to those around him, whom he may think or see to be less perfect than himself, but by the law of God, and with the holy example of Jesus, which is the law practically exhibited for the imitation of his followers. The Christian is living every day in the presence of God, realizes and feels, and is looking at himself habitually, in the light of God's truth and holiness, he sees as in a polished mirror, the defects in his own character, and takes cheerfully his place in the dust. The Christian enjoys God's divine presence, and the brightest manifestations of the glory of God, always finding him taking the lowest place, and like Job says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The Christian feels the Spirit that leads him, and gives testimony that through Jesus Christ his salvation is made sure, and that God keeps him free from the influence of this sinful world! He can truly say that he is kept by the power of the Lord; and will praise and adore His holy name, for his power to heal both soul and body. The Christian praises God for the light that does shine in his soul; and leads and guides him in the right way. He was led out of bondage and made to see that in Christ was

freedom. He has come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, in the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirit of just men made perfect. The Christian will not only show his humility in his communion with God but in his intercourse with men. He is ever ready to render honor to whom honor is due, so that when those of age and experience would interpose to temper his ardor and regulate his course, he will respectfully and meekly hear, and seriously consider. And if their counsel commends itself to his understanding and his conscience, he will cheerfully yield, and that too, when compliance is asked with the most painful self-denial; and if in the impetuosity of his feelings he has taken his course, he will, on conviction of his mistake, he will promptly retrace his steps with ingenuous confession of his error.

Nor will he, as far as appears, ever treat any one with that contempt, or even disrespect which is the offspring of pride. His sense of propriety and and humility will ever restrain him from rudely denouncing those whose zeal and devotedness are apparently less than his own. The Christian grace is humility and gentleness, an ornament which gives softness and loveliness to all the rest.

The Christian summed up as follows appears to an unprejudiced mind the sum total: He that will honor the Father and examines himself with respect to his own religious experience, and his knowledge of Christian theology, and has ability to teach and to defend the truth of the Gospel, has humility, gentleness, temperance, a desire to be mighty in the Scriptures, ready at all times to lay down his life for Christ, willing to do God's holy and righteous will, ready to sacrifice all his earthly possessions and attainments, and follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and constantly obeys the ten commandments, and having put on the armor of the Lord and appended the breast-plate of righteousness, storming the citadel of Satan's strongholds, bringing back from a lost and ruined state, to peace and happiness those who wandered far away from their Savior and their God. And when he can say,

Lord thou hast seen and searched me thro;
Thine eye commands with piercing view;
My rising and my resting hours,
My heart and flesh, with all thy powers.
O, may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.

With all these attributes a man is truly a Christian. Amen.
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